

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 4836

FROM AMBASSADOR FOR EUR DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY VINE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OTRA, SV, NO, PFOR

SUBJ: CONSULTATIONS WITH NORWEGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY ON THE ARCTIC

REF: OSLO 4781

1. IN CONVERSATION TODAY WITH FOREIGN MINISTRY FRYDENLUND, I MENTIONED TO HIM THAT IF OSLO CONSULTATIONS TOOK PLACE AS PROPOSED IN SECOND HALF OF JANUARY, THEY ARE LIKELY TO OCCUR AFTER COMPLETION OF OUR STUDY. HE THEN ASKED DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS VIBE TO LOOK INTO ALTERNATIVE DATES. AT CLOSE OF BUSINESS IN FOREIGN MINISTRY, VIBE HAD HAD TIME ONLY TO DISCUSS DATES WITH DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR LEGAL AFFAIRS ELIASSEN WHO SUGGESTED THAT DEC 18, 19 AND 20 WOULD SEEM LIKE BEST EARLIER ALTERNATIVE FOR VARIETY OF REASONS.

2. MAJOR CONSIDERATION IN PROPOSING JANUARY CONSULTATIONS WAS CONCERN THAT THERE MAY BE SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES IN SVALBARD POLICY AS RESULT OF STARTING DEBATE WHICH WILL OCCUR ON DEC 16 OR 17 (NOT NOV 17 AS INDICATED IN REFTEL). THE THREE STARTING COMMITTEES (FOREIGN AFFAIRS, INDUSTRY, FINANCE) WHICH VISITED SVALBARD LAST SPRING CAME BACK STEAMED UP OVER NEED FOR NORWAY TO ASSERT ITS SOVEREIGNTY MORE STRONGLY ON THE ARCHIPELAGO. VIBE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF STARTING STRENGTHENS THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE

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PRESENT JUSTICE MINISTRY REPORT. NORWEGIANS BELIEVE THEIR

CONSULTATIONS WITH US SHOULD TAKE THESE CONCLUSIONS INTO CONSIDERATION. AND THEY EXPECT TO BEGIN PREPARATION FOR STARTING DEBATE IN PERIOD BETWEEN CONSULTATIONS WITH BRITISH AND SOVIETS IN NOVEMBER.

3. THERE ARE OTHER FACTORS AFFECTING TIME. NORWEGIANS ARE CONCERNED THAT NEGOTIATIONS WITH SOVIETS ON BARENTS SEA CONTINENTAL SHELF MAY RUN INTO FIRST WEEK IN DECEMBER AND THEY ARE NOT PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS TO HAVE BOTH DELEGATIONS IN TOWN AT SAME TIME, FOR COSMETIC AS WELL AS PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OF AVAILABLE PERSONNEL. SECOND WEEK IN DECEMBER WILL BE OCCUPIED WITH PREPARATIONS FOR NATO MINISTERIAL AND MINISTERIAL ITSELF, WHICH TIES UP KEY OFFICIALS IN WHAT IS AFTER ALL A VERY SMALL MINISTRY. NORWEGIANS ARE EVEN LESS ANXIOUS TO HAVE U.S. DELEGATION ARRIVING TO DISCUSS SVALBARD AT BEGINNING OF FOLLOWING WEEK (MONDAY, DEC 15) ON EVE OF AND PERHAPS COINCIDENT WITH STARTING DEBATE. HENCE PROPOSAL FOR WHAT THEY RECOGNIZE IS DATE WHICH IS A BIT LATE AND CLOSE TO CHRISTMAS TO BE ENTIRELY DESIRABLE.

4. VIBE PROMISED TO THINK ABOUT ALTERNATIVE DATES OVER THE WEEKEND, BUT OBVIOUSLY HOPES THAT YOU WILL FIND DEC 18-20 PERIOD ACCEPTABLE. FROM OUR STANDPOINT, OF COURSE, YOUR WISHES IN THIS MATTER ARE THE DETERMINING FACTOR. THERE IS SOME LOGIC, HOWEVER, TO THE NORWEGIAN POSITION IF THE TIMING WILL ALLOW YOUR CONSULTATIONS HERE TO TAKE PLACE BEFORE OUR STUDY IS CONCLUDED. WE WOULD APPRECIATE EARLY REPLY SINCE VIBE WILL BE DISCUSSING QUESTION WITH DCM ON MONDAY, NOV 3.
BYRNE

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